

What is Claimed is:

- SAC*
1. A payment processing system, comprising:  
a data center;  
a postage metering system located remotely from the data center; and  
a control system in operative communication with the data center and the postage metering system, the control system for:  
obtaining payment data via the postage metering system, the payment data including a payee and a payment amount; and  
dispatching payment from the data center to the payee for the payment amount.
  2. The payment processing system of claim 1, wherein:  
the control system is further for:  
coordinating printing by the postage metering system of an indication of the third party payment on a mailpiece intended for delivery to the payee.
  3. The payment processing system of claim 2, wherein:  
the payment data further includes a date on which the payment is authorized for dispatch.
  4. The payment processing system of claim 3, wherein:  
the third party payment indication includes a digital signature of at least a portion of the payment data so that any attempts to tamper with the payment data are detectable.
  5. The payment processing system of claim 4, wherein:  
the mailpiece is a business return mailpiece provided by the payee.
- SAC*

- C
6. The payment processing system of claim 5, wherein:  
the control system is further for:  
collecting payments from a plurality of postage metering systems  
that are directed to the payee before dispatching an  
aggregated payment to the payee.
  7. The payment processing system of claim 1, wherein:  
the control system is further for:  
collecting payments from a plurality of postage metering systems  
that are directed to the payee before dispatching an  
aggregated payment to the payee.
  8. The payment processing system of claim 7, wherein:  
the payment data further includes a date on which the payment is  
authorized for dispatch.
  9. A method of operating a payment processing system, the method  
comprising the step(s) of:  
locating a postage metering system remotely from a data center;  
transmitting payment data via a postage metering system to the data  
center, the payment data including a payee and a payment amount;  
and  
dispatching payment from the data center to the payee for the payment  
amount.
  10. The method of claim 9, further comprising the step(s) of:  
coordinating printing by the postage metering system of an indication of  
the third party payment on a mailpiece intended for delivery to the  
payee.

- Sub C1*
- Sub A2*
- Sub C1*
11. The method of claim 10, wherein:  
the payment data further includes a date on which the payment is  
authorized for dispatch.
  12. The method of claim 11, further comprising the step(s) of:  
generating a digital signature of at least a portion of the payment data and  
including the digital signature with the third party payment indication so  
that any attempts to tamper with the payment data are detectable.
  13. The method of claim 12, further comprising the step(s) of:  
providing a business return mailpiece for use as the mailpiece.
  14. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step(s) of:  
collecting payments from a plurality of postage metering systems that are  
directed to the payee before dispatching an aggregated payment to  
the payee.
  15. The method of claim 9, further comprising the step(s) of:  
collecting payments from a plurality of postage metering systems that are  
directed to the payee before dispatching an aggregated payment to  
the payee.
  16. The method of claim 15, wherein:  
the payment data further includes a date on which the payment is  
authorized for dispatch.
  17. A method of operating a data center, the method comprising the step(s)  
of:  
establishing a transaction session with a postage metering system  
remotely from the data center;

receiving payment data via the postage metering system, the payment data including a payee and a payment amount; and dispatching payment to the payee for the payment amount.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising the step(s) of:  
coordinating printing by the postage metering system of an indication of  
the third party payment on a mailpiece intended for delivery to the  
payee.
  19. The method of claim 18, wherein:  
the payment data further includes a date on which the payment is  
authorized for dispatch.
  20. The method of claim 19, further comprising the step(s) of:  
generating a digital signature of at least a portion of the payment data and  
including the digital signature with the third party payment indication so  
that any attempts to tamper with the payment data are detectable.
  21. The method of claim 20, further comprising the step(s) of:  
collecting payments from a plurality of postage metering systems that are  
directed to the payee before dispatching an aggregated payment to  
the payee.
  22. The method of claim 17, further comprising the step(s) of:  
collecting payments from a plurality of postage metering systems that are  
directed to the payee before dispatching an aggregated payment to  
the payee.

C /

23. The method of claim 22, wherein:  
the payment data further includes a date on which the payment is  
authorized for dispatch.

and  
C2